

Heat Wave Continues to Take Toll on Marylanders

Governor O'Malley Urges Marylanders to Take Steps to Stay Cool

State heat-related deaths rise to eight for 2010

*Heat-related Deaths Update***

Department of Health & Mental Hygiene News Release

BALTIMORE, MD (July 7, 2010) - After record breaking hot temperatures and the second hottest day ever recorded, the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) announces two more heat-related deaths. Hot weather has contributed to eight Maryland deaths so far this season.

The latest reported hyperthermia-related fatalities are an Anne Arundel County adult (19 to 64) whose death was unpended from late May, and a Baltimore City adult who died this week. The Anne Arundel County individual collapsed inside their home after working outdoors; the Baltimore City adult was found inside an home with air temperatures over 90 degrees.

"I can't emphasize enough how important it is to take precautions against these record breaking temperatures that we are currently experiencing in our state," said Governor Martin O'Malley. "Find a place where it is cool, drink plenty of water or fruit juice and take it easy."

Cooling Centers have been open throughout the metropolitan region and provide an option for those who need a cool place to stay during the day.

"Chronic health conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, and respiratory illnesses can dramatically increase an individual's risk in these scorching temperatures, said DHMH Secretary John M. Colmers. "There are simple steps people can take to protect themselves. The most important one is to stay out of the heat and take the time to stay in touch with families, friends and neighbors."

DHMH cautions Maryland citizens that heatstroke and heat exhaustion can easily develop from the hot and humid conditions typically associated with Maryland summers.

Heatstroke is a serious illness characterized by a body temperature greater than 105 degrees. Symptoms may include dry red skin, convulsions, disorientation, delirium and coma. Onset of heatstroke can be rapid: a person can go from feeling apparently well to a seriously ill condition within minutes. Treatment of heatstroke involves the rapid lowering of body temperature, using a cool bath or wet towels. A heatstroke victim should be kept in a cool area; emergency medical care should be obtained by dialing 911.

Heat exhaustion is a milder form of heatstroke that may develop due to a combination of several days with high temperatures and dehydration in an individual. Signs of heat exhaustion include extreme weakness, muscle cramps, nausea, or headache. Victims may also vomit or faint. Heat exhaustion is treated with plenty of liquids and rest in a cool, shaded area. Those on a low-sodium diet or with other health problems should contact a doctor.

Hot weather tips:

- Drink plenty of fluids such as water and fruit juices to prevent dehydration -- be aware that alcohol can impair the body's sweat mechanism, as can fairly common medications such as antihistamines and diuretics;

- Wear loose-fitting, lightweight, and light-colored clothes;
- Avoid direct sunlight by staying in the shade and by wearing sunscreen, a hat and sunglasses;
- When possible, stay in air-conditioned areas. If your home is not air-conditioned, consider a visit to a shopping mall or public library. Contact your local health department to see if there are any cooling centers in your area or visit <http://spdev.dhmd.gov:21115/SitePages/Home.aspx> and click on "Heat-related Illness and Cooling Center Information";
- NEVER leave pets or young children in a car, even with the windows cracked;
- Check on elderly relatives or neighbors at least daily; and
- Take it easy when outdoors. Athletes and those who work outdoors should take short breaks when feeling fatigued. Schedule physical activity during the morning or evening when it is cooler.
- In 2009, six heat-related deaths were reported; 2008 - 17 and in 2007 - 21.

To learn more about preventing heat related illness:

1. [Visit Governor O'Malley's Blog - Links to local Cooling Center information to manage in the extreme heat.](#)
2. [Click on DHMH's Heat-related Illness and Cooling Center Information](#)
3. Visit MEMA at www.mema.state.md.us and click on "Other Natural Disasters."